Staff Photos—Joe McTyre

BIG TOP GOING UP: CIRCUS STAGE (LEFT) NEARLY COMPLETED. FLYING SAUCER IN FOREGROUND DELIVERS CLOWNS
At Right, Marty Krofft Poses With Circus' Jolly Fat Lady

6 Flags Puppet Show Is Astounding

By DIANE THOMAS
Constitution Entertainment Editor

Imagine a whopping big circus production number—the finale.

Two baton twirlers come onstage, followed by 16 marching soldiers and 20 dancing girls.

From the roof of the big top 12 aerial artists descend, along with four "iron jaw maidens," gripping ropes in their teeth.

"Two billion billion" bubbles are released into the air, as a girl astride a mammoth eagle is lowered to the stage. Giant replicas of Uncle Sam and the Statue of Liberty pop up on either side of the proscenium, as two women are shot from a cannon and dancing water fountains on the stage come alive.

At the climactic moment, animal cages lining the walls of the circus area are lit and the animals perform amid scores of American flag pennants.

ASTOUNDING

You got all that, now? Haven't missed anything? Now listen to this: All the performers are puppets. The above action makes up the two - minute finale of Sid and Marty Krofft's Puppet Circus, set to open at Six Flags Over Georgia Amusement park June 16.

If you've always thought, like I have, that puppets are for children and a few arty weirdos trying to revive Punch and Judy shows, that if you're more than 10 feet away, you can't see what's going on in the tiny box stages, and not much will go on anyway—forget it. You've got a lot to learn.

The brothers Krofft are fifth generation puppeteers, but they don't practice their art in isolation. Their shows sound like a combination of elements from Vaudeville, Burlesque, the Ziegfeld Folies and the Folies Bergere, the Broadway stage and the movie production numbers of Busby Berkeley. Six Flags' Circus is their first family show.

The Krofft puppet dynasty was begun in Athens, Greece, in the early 1700's, when a British puppeteer trained a young Greek boy to help him with his theater. Since that time, one male member of the Krofft family has handed down his puppet artistry to the next.

DOLLS OF PARIS

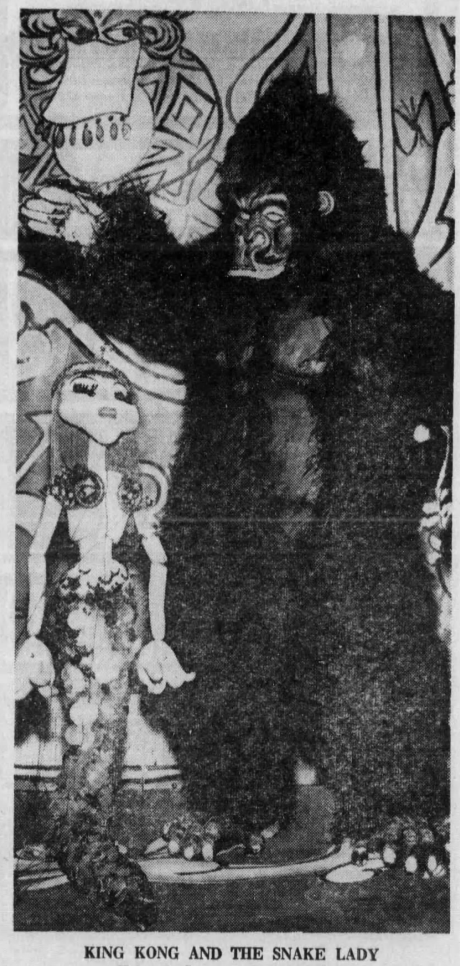
Sid toured with his father, and was spotted in London by Jack Benny, who brought him to Hollywood to appear on a television show. This led to nightclub tours with Judy Garland and Tony Martin. He was joined by Marty after the younger brother had completed university work.

Club appearances were coming thick and fast, but Sid wanted to establish a permanent Krofft theater in America. This was done with "Les Poupees de Paris" (the dolls of Paris), a puppet show for adults, based on the shows at the Lido and the Folies Bergere.

They opened "Les Poupees" in 1960, 40 miles from Los Angeles in a restaurant in the San Fernando Valley. From there they moved to a Krofft theater in Hollywood, and then took the show to both the Seattle and New York World's Fairs. A second company of "Les Poupees" then went into operation in Las Vegas and on New Orleans' Bourbon Street, where the slinky wooden dolls consistently ran a good race with their live competition.

The Circus show is just as

Continued on Page 7-A



KING KONG AND THE SNAKE LADY
Kong Is Largest Cast Member

'COME UP AND SEE ME SOMETIME'
Sid Krofft and Mae West Puppet

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Puppet Circus at Six Flags

Continued from Page 3-A

elaborate as "Les Poupees," each costing around $250,000 to mount. (One puppet alone runs anywhere from $500 to $1,000, and the circus has a "cast of 140.)

HEAVY PRODUCTION

The specially constructed puppet theater at Six Flags seats 1,200, and the stage is almost big enough to accommodate people. Twenty-six feet wide, sixteen feet deep and eight feet high, it has six traps in the floor, three elevators and enough rigging to fly eighteen backdrops. It took one year to design and build. Broadway designer Oliver Smith commented once that their productions were "heavier than 'My Fair Lady.'"

The circus show will run approximately 30 minutes and is studded with its share of "name performers." Puppet miniatures of Lucille Ball, Liberace, Mae West, Tarzan, Batman, Superman, Jackie Gleason and King Kong are featured.

On the stereo tape soundtrack that accompanies the show are voices of many of the stars recorded especially to accompany their puppets in the production.

All the usual circus acts are included in the show — the fat lady, the thin man, a snake lady named Koreena, a sword swallower, a knife thrower and his beautiful helper and more. Mae West tames lions; Tarzan

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